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ABSTRACT

Many women find the modern nuclear family confining and oppressive, and seek liberation. Moving ahead to the postmodern family, as feminists advocate, is not the only path. Back-to-the-landers find fulfillment in the interdependent premodern family model. Surveys and interviews of over 2,000 back-to-the-landers over a period of 15 years are used to explore female independence and sense of fulfillment within a movement that attempts to recapture part of an idyllic past while still captive to modern notions of gender equity and deference. The average respondent was 47 and well educated, had been married 15 years, and had two children. Results show a clear division of labor along gender lines, yet perceived and apparent inequity in the division of labor does not affect satisfaction with partner or other quality of life factors (general happiness and general satisfaction) for back-to-the-landers, particularly females. While the spiritual nature of back-to-the-land living and a sense of freedom (leisure) do not explain variance in satisfaction with a partner relationship, these two dimensions of back-to-country life do account for considerable variance in general happiness and general satisfaction, indicating that they may function as compensating factors for female smallholders. A discussion of the "social glue" that holds families together, and the link between family sustainability and planetary sustainability suggests that the best option may be to go back, in order to move ahead. Survey results are presented in four tables and an appendix. Contains endnotes. (TD)

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Planetary Sustainability and Sustaining Family Relationships: Family Division of Labor and the Possibility of Female Liberation in the Back-to-the-Land Movement of the Late Twentieth

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Introduction

"When going back makes sense, you are going ahead."[1] Kentucky farmer, and retired English professor, Wendell Berry placed this aphorism at the end of an essay he wrote to criticize the unsustainable character of modern factory farming. Berry claims that petro-chemical intensive farming, from pesticides that contaminate farm drinking water to mammoth tractors that turn topsoil to hardpan, has the potential to destroy the taken-for-granted productivity of American agriculture. Since energy and capital intensive agriculture is rapidly drawing down the resource base on which much of American prosperity rests, and since it produces more food than we can either eat or sell, farmer-professor Berry believes it is time to reconsider farming techniques abandoned more than a half century ago — to go back, for example, to using horses in place of tractors.

Berry's agricultural conservatism (going back to move ahead) is intriguing, and the expert counter-attack, along with Berry's defense of his iconoclasm, raises and clarifies a set of important and closely connected issues: farm overproduction and the decline of the rural farm population, the necessary conditions for a sense of community in rural as well as in urban America, and, perhaps most importantly, the relationship of good stewardship to the long-term health of our individual communities. Our purpose, however, in introducing this paper with Wendell Berry's concerns over the destructive practices of corporate agriculture is not to write our own assessment of the state of contemporary American agriculture. We want, instead, to use Berry's critique of modern farming to introduce a significant "anti-modernist" movement of the late twentieth century, the back-to-the-land phenomenon, and then to explore the question of female independence and sense of fulfillment within a movement that attempts to recapture part of an idyllic past while still captive to modern notions of gender equity and deference.

Back-to-the-Landers

Millions of Americans are sympathetic to Wendell Berry's anti-modernist convictions. A significant number of them, likely numbering in the hundreds of thousands, have acted on their beliefs by selling suburban homes and quitting city jobs in order to move to the countryside to take up the practice of semi-subsistent agriculture on a few acres of land. For the past 15 years we have interviewed and sent questionnaires to more than 2000 of these "back-to-the-landers" who go in search of the simple life in rural America.[2] Our objective in studying the back-to-the-landers was to see how far a group of dedicated individuals could go in detaching themselves from what they saw as unsustainable, modern institutions: commercial agriculture, a volatile labor market, unresponsive and gridlocked government, and a self-destructive consumer culture.

The smallholders' ultimate goal is independent and peaceful country living — being able to earn an income from their properties, grow most of their food, and enjoy the tranquillity of a life close to nature. In practice, however, compromise defines their day-to-day lives. Half of them have to commute to a city job in order make enough money to pay their mortgages. Very few of them can earn sufficient income from small-scale farming to support themselves, and on average the neo-homesteaders grow only a third of the food their families consume. To survive on their smallholdings they use, in addition to city jobs, combinations of part-time and seasonal work, barter, small business enterprise and retirement income.

But even though reality rarely matches their expectations, few back-to-the-landers entertain second thoughts of returning to city life. One of the survey respondents affirmed this dedication on the back of her returned questionnaire: "All improvements and projects take FOREVER. Almost nothing has gone as we thought. But we hated city life and had to get away. We love this wild place and neither of us would move back!" Another respondent, after reporting that her husband had just been hired full-time with medical and dental benefits, went on to write: "It was a lot harder for us to survive here than we ever thought it would be. We feel we are over the hump now. We would never go back to the city, even if my husband did not get this job. We would have just gone on doing without and enjoying country living."

Although back-to-the-landers are a generally pacific group of people, they are sometimes confused with racial supremacist or survivalist groups that attempt to establish rural enclaves. Smallholders, however, trace their spiritual genealogy through the free spirits of Haight Ashbury to the yeoman farmers of ninetieth century America, rather than through neo-Nazis and on to Grand Wizards of the Ku Klux Klan.

Back-to-the-landers are generally well educated. Almost three in five, following the surveys drawn from the subscriber lists of back-to-the-land magazines, have at least some academic college, and one in eight has a graduate degree (MAs in anthropology to PhDs in wildlife biology). Most of them rationalize their return to the land in an academically inspired mixture of philosophy and ecology. They are, nevertheless, pragmatists who do not allow the distance between what they see when they look out their back windows and the pages of the Mother Earth News or Organic Gardening lying open on their kitchen tables to diminish their everyday enjoyment of country life.

Pre-Modern, Modern and Post-Modern Families

Back-to-the-landers are not easy to categorize. Contradictory is an adjective one could use to describe both their worldview and their behavior. Labeling them "conventional radicals" or "modest revolutionaries" perhaps best captures the complexity of their lives. They are radical and revolutionary in the sense that they belong to a movement that runs counter to urban America and its large-scale corporatism. But their independence of mind and spirit is a carefully circumscribed iconoclasm. They possess an ingrained sentimentalism in favor of family, spiritual and pastoral values that exposes their conventional side. The conventional aspect of their lives is clearly revealed in the nature of their marriages. Four out of five are married, and just less than one in twenty have common-law relationships. The rest are divided among the never married, widowed, and divorced or separated. Those married or living common law have an average length of relationship of 15 years, for a group with an average age of 47. Large families in the ninetieth century yeoman tradition, however, have not resulted from these unions. On average the survey respondents have two children, with one child still at home.

Commitment to long-term, stable marriages would appear to confirm the conventional dispositions of the back-to-the-landers. This conventionality, however, possesses a superficial quality. Rather than give unqualified support to the traditional, modern family, the neo-homesteaders share with contemporary feminists a number of parallel reservations on the viability of the modern family, with particular concerns over the ability of women to find satisfaction with domestic roles increasing restricted to those of primary nurturers and caregivers in their homes.

The "modern" family, for the purposes of our discussion, is the isolated nuclear family that became culturally dominant in the two decades following the end of World War II, represented by such popular cultural icons as "Father's Knows Best," "Ozzie and Harriet," and "Leave It to Beaver." On either side of the historical and ideological space occupied by the modern family are pre-modern and post-modern[3] families. The pre-modern family would appear to be only a historical relic in the form of eighteenth and ninetieth century farm, or contemporary peasant, families, now partially reincarnated in the back-to-the-land families of the late twentieth century. The dual-career household, often without children, is the prototypical post-modern family, one that according to specifications, permits women liberation from the domestic duties of the modern family while preserving a core conjugal relationship.[4]

Smallholders and feminists are in essential agreement on where and how they see the fault lines spreading through and undermining the institutional strength of the modern family. Back-to-the-landers are sympathetic to feminist explanations of how the role of women changed and diminished as the pre-modern farm families of the eighteenth and ninetieth evolved into the modern families of the 1950s and 1960s.

Modern appliances and a food production industry that prepares and packages ready-to-cook food for the kitchen stove or microwave oven have transformed women from nineteenth century household producers (part of the "household mode of production") to twentieth century homemakers. From a late twentieth century perspective, this shift would seem to be an unproblematically positive one. There is here the appearance of a first stage liberation: women freed from long hours of physical labor are able to focus their energy on the social and psychological needs of their family members.

Many feminists, however, with back-to-the-landers still following their line of analysis, believe the twentieth century technological revolutions have undermined the status of women, both within their homes and communities. On the ninetieth century yeoman homestead, women, in spite of prevailing patriarchal rhetoric, worked as roughly equal partners with the men of their households. Women's physical labor was essential to the survival of their families. Although they did not always work along side their husbands in the fields where the cash crops were grown, their productive work was both complimentary and necessary. They tended the smaller farm animals and the farm gardens. They harvested fruit and vegetables and butchered chickens, geese and turkeys. Farm women turned homestead fiber into clothing, and preserved homestead produce to sustain their families until the start of the next harvest season.

Nineteenth century farms could not have survived without women's muscle power. Consequently, conjugal relationships were of an interdependent character. Even in the absence of the cultural resources of the norms and mores that support feminine equality and fulfillment, men were nevertheless constrained from either psychologically or physically intimidating their wives. If a woman were to withdraw her considerable domestic services, the homestead enterprise would have become precarious, without long-term prospect for success. In contrast, women in the modern family have dependent relationships with their husbands. They earn no independent income, and without claim on essential productive work to demonstrate their value, their absence from the home constitutes more of an inconvenience than a disaster. Given, by the mid-twentieth century, the trivialization and peripheralization of women's roles in the modern family, it is surprising that modern marriages often do work well, and at times very well. But, at the same time, it should come as little surprise that

dependent women in the modern home are vulnerable to abuse, and without the leverage of irreplaceable labor, they are not always able to imagine an escape from oppressive circumstances. None of this, of course, denies that many women do find fulfillment in the more limited roles of the modern family, and, in fact, see their limited roles allowing them to focus their energies on the all important care-giving and nurturing functions.[5]

Although feminists and smallholders arrive at essentially the same diagnosis for the infirmities of the modern family, they part company on the issue of a remedy. Feminists typically see women's liberation from the confinement of modern family in the evolution of the post-moderns family. At the center of the post-modern family are two financially independent, and consequently, equal partners, who are drawn together by romantic love, and whose economic circumstances allow them to transcend both the interdependency of the pre-modern family, with its hard physical labor, and the female dependency in the modern family, with its marginalization of women's material contributions to family well-being. No longer subject to the domestic requirements of the modern household, women of the post-modern family are free to develop their talents and find fulfillment in private and public sector employment.[6]

Back-to-the-landers are skeptical on the degree of liberation the post-modern family can provide women. Neo-homesteaders place a high priority on freedom, but suspect that post-modern women often trade independent incomes for less than fulfilling work in the center of corporate hierarchies, substituting a husband's oversight for a supervisor's direction. In contrast, back-to-the-land women seek their own liberation from the constraints of the modern family by going back to pre-modern family forms. Working in partnership with their husbands and children to produce a substantial part of what their families consume, back-to-the-land women believe they can have a greater sense of freedom and find more fulfillment than if they were to pursue their own professional careers. For them, "when going back makes sense, you are going ahead."[7]

These are the typical sentiments back-to-the-landers carry with them to the countryside. But how successful are they in translating their dreams into reality? Do women still get stuck doing the dishes? My interviews and surveys can tell us quite a bit about how far the neo-homesteaders are able to go in reconstructing viable pre-modern families, and the extent to which they have been able to escape both the real and imagined deficiencies of the modern family.

Dreams and Reality[8]

Back-to-the-land is about healing the fragmented lives of harried city folk. Rather than allowing the centrifugal forces of work, school and recreation to scatter family members across the urban landscape at the start of each day, the demands of homestead work are designed pull the family together in the union of production and consumption. And there are times when practice matches intention. A California correspondent explained, "We try to live a partnership of equals, both producing income and sharing or alternating household tasks. I (the husband) do over half the cooking because I enjoy it, and all the dish washing because my wife doesn't enjoy it. I pay some bills, she pays others. She takes care of our five cats because I would rather not have pets at all. But I should be more alert to help with house cleaning without her having to ask me." A forty-year-old woman smallholder, also from California, expressed similar sentiments, "We are best friends and partners and consider our home a place of equal responsibility. We share the work and chores of keeping the house up and garden and

animals going. We do it all fairly equally, even the boring stuff! Some tasks suit one or the other better — I love to cook and he loves to hunt and fish. I'm better at finances; he's better at striking deals, bargaining or trading. It works out."

But perfectly coordinated partnerships are back-to-the-land exceptions. The common thread running through the neo-homesteaders' accounts of their family life is compromise. A Missouri smallholder summed up her experience this way: "Sometimes my ideals don't match up with the lifestyle I have chosen. That's because I'm married to a wonderful man whose opinions are not always the same as mine. We compromise a lot."

One of the essential components of the strategic compromises that become second nature to the back-to-the-landers is the ability to tolerate the often considerable gaps between dreams and their implementation. The comments of a 40 year-old Washington father and smallholder represent this tolerant approach to the back-to-the-land division of labor: "We bought this place to get out of town and eventually made a paying farm out of it. We are slowly getting the soil built up and a crop started. I am the farmer, my wife the gentleperson farmer, my 16 year-old daughter is a horse nut, and my 11 year-old son is a motorcycle and bike person. We don't all pull together or like the same things but we get along after a fashion."

These kinds of tensions described by the Missouri smallholder can be blunted by a sense of humor, one that accommodates both pain and irony. A middle-aged Minnesota college instructor characterized his predicament in the following way: "Prior to moving closer to town four years ago, we lived on a 200 acre farm for 12 years. We really tried living off the land — wood heat, milk goats, and growing all of our own food. The children felt isolated. They actually hated living so far out. The family wanted more of the 'comforts' of civilization. We now live a 'mid-ground' type of life. Would I move back? In a second! Would my wife? No way! The yuppies in us have won!"

The reflections by the back-to-the-landers on their struggles to realize their homestead dreams do provide insight into the difficulties involved in changing established patterns of family relationships. But to come to a more precise and systematic understanding of how smallholders divide up farmstead responsibilities, we presented the survey respondents a list of common farm and household chores and asked them to tell me who usually did the particular job in question (usually the husband, usually the wife, or both about the same). We also asked the respondents to report how satisfied they were with the way work was divided up on their homesteads (from very satisfied to not at all satisfied).

A clear pattern emerges from the survey responses to the division of homestead responsibilities questions: back-to-the-land partners are not likely to work side by side, nor share equally the demands of farmstead labor. Just one in four questionnaire respondents say that both the husband and wife on their smallholdings contribute equally to commons tasks like gardening and animal care, although women are no more likely than men to end up with most of the responsibility for these two chores. But when it comes to work that has been traditionally ascribed along gender lines, a sharp division of labor emerges. Four out of five survey respondents say that men usually take care of the homestead repair work and nine of ten report than men do most of the wood cutting. Domestic labor shows the same kind of gender biased pattern. Women usually end up preparing meals, washing dishes and doing the household cleaning. Just one in 16 males is likely to do most of the house cleaning, and only one in ten does most of the dish washing or cooking.

These survey results initially surprised us. In interviews with back-to-the-land families, it was common for both partners to express a desire to transcend institutionalized male-female work roles, and to labor side by side while sharing equally in smallholding responsibilities. But upon reflection we remembered that affirmations of gender equity were often followed by expressions of frustrations at the inability to live up the initial ideals. The comments of a Minnesota respondent provides insight into why egalitarian aspirations do not immediately become homestead realities. "Life is great in the country, but hard. My husband and I both have jobs 40 miles away. I do the morning chores (5 a.m. to 7 a.m.) and then go to work; my husband does the evening chores (4 p.m. to 6 p.m.). Soon we will both be home full-time, and then life will be perfect!"

We do not know whether life has become "perfect" for this smallholder, but we can say that most back-to-the-landers struggle with long-term imperfection. Men typically work full-time away from their farmsteads to pay mortgages and buy the accouterments of the well-supplied homestead. It is not, then, simply social inertia or personal inconsiderateness that shifts a disproportionate share of homestead work to back-to-the-land women, but the logistics required when a family of modest means tries to establish a working mini-farm. The comments of another survey respondent affirm his reality: "My answers to the questions reflect that we are just establishing a farm, and my husband works full-time and more at his job. So, most things fall on me. This spring I must build a buck barn, a sheep shelter, a pig enclosure and shelter, get the gardens going and keep up the landscape for the wildlife we are trying to encourage to come back to the property."

But, one might wonder, does this unequal division of labor somehow contaminate back-to-the-land relationships. And there is evidence of resentment on the part of female smallholders. One expressed herself this way: "My husband is gone far more than he is home, so a great deal of the responsibility falls on me. Very little has turned out like we planned. I am alone most of the time. Everything could be so much better if my husband could be home, and have the time we need to do things!" This kind of tension carried over to specific questionnaire responses on the division of homestead chores. Women were twice as likely as men to report dissatisfaction with the way particular farmstead tasks were divided up, and close to a third of women survey respondents were dissatisfied with having to do most of the house cleaning.

For most smallholders, however, the unequal division of labor on the back-to-the-land homesteads appears to be more of an irritant than a fatal infection, and one that does not migrate to the sphere of personal and family relationships. One confirmation of this generalization is that women are just as likely as men to see the relationship with their spouses and their families as positive — 95 per cent of the survey respondents are either "very" or "fairly" satisfied with these relationships.

In trying to understand why back-to-the-landers, and in particular women smallholders, offer remarkably high evaluations of their conjugal and family relationships, in spite of an often superficial resemblance between dreams and reality, we want to come back to the distinctions we made earlier among pre-modern, modern and post-modern families. Many women find the modern family confining and oppressive, and seek liberation in one variation or another of the post-modern family. But as the interviews, case studies and surveys suggest, moving ahead to the post-modern family is not the only path to liberation. Pre-modern families, even the imperfect households the back-to-the-landers assemble, provide many women the sense of fulfillment they find absent in the modern family. One of our correspondents, a woman from Montana, captured the attraction

of back-to-the-land family life, where there is the potential of a union between production and consumption, when she concluded her comments on the back of her returned questionnaire: "We keep goats because they are our therapy. They get us out in the mornings when otherwise we'd have no occasion to go out. Early morning is the most beautiful time of the day. And one of my little goats turned out to be a six quart milker, a little love! 'For it is in the dew of little things the heart finds its morning and is refreshed.'"

Theoretical Reflections and Policy Implications

The interviews of members of back-to-the-land families, along with the surveys, support the idea that women can and do find personal liberation in the pre-modern family as they work with (though not always at the side of) their spouses as partners in a productive enterprise. This conclusion in no way denies the validity of the satisfaction women from post modern families experience as they pursue their independent careers, nor does it question the fulfillment women receive from their nurturing roles in the modern family. But these reflections on the benefits, disadvantages and tradeoffs in the comparison of pre-modern to post-modern families raise troubling questions on the long-term sustainability of the post-modern, and by extension, modern family.

The issue of the sustainable character of modern and post-modern families invites questions as to the nature of the "social glue" that holds families together. In the pre-modern world the cohesive force that held families together was need — the household could not have survived without the labor of each of its members, from that young girls caring for infant siblings to old men weaving straw mats. Even in the sometimes contrived environments of contemporary back-to-the-land families need can still be an essential part of everyday life. A woman in her late 50s from California reported, "When we moved from the city to the country our children thrived because we <u>needed</u> them to help repair this old house, <u>and</u> they knew it. Their former city friends, in many cases, got into trouble or drugs." Another woman simply affirmed, "Without our children's help we could not have done the many things we did."

Rather than need, the bonding agent that pulls the marriage partners in modern and post-modern families toward each other is, of course, romantic love. But romantic love, by itself, as a long-term attractive force, is relatively weak. Since spouses in post-modern families are, by definition, if not in fact, economically independent of each other, there is little to hold them together, beyond perhaps unpaid credit card accounts, when romance wanes, as it almost inevitably does. Commitment to children or an ethnic or religious tradition can provide sufficient adhesion to keep marriages intact during a relationships' difficult periods, but partners in a post-modern marriage typically avoid these kinds of involvements. As a consequence, without the kind of compelling need that prevails in pre-modern families to compliment the affection that modern and post-modern family members expect, conjugal bonds are inherently brittle.

But, after all, the pre-modern family is "pre-modern," and to write, think, or talk about it appears to be little more than an exercise in nostalgia. Back-to-the-land families, of course, do exist, and it is likely more than a million North Americans belong to one kind or another of these families. And even though its members constitute less than one-half of one per cent of the general population population, the back-to-the-land movement is not completely idiosyncratic. A Roper Organization survey in 1993, for example, estimated that 14 per cent of Americans can be classified as "True-Blue Greens," a group that not only supports the environmental movement,

but also takes action by recycling and sorting trash, refusing to buy non-biodegradable soaps, and writing politicians on environmental concerns. The Roper Organization also identified another 6 per cent of the general population who support the True-Blue Greens' commitments, although they do not consistently translate their values into action. There are, then, likely 50 million or more North Americans who want to harmonize their lifestyles with the demands of ecological sustainability. And a sizable segment of this group, presumably, would be interested in alternatives to the modern and post-modern social and family forms implicated in jeopardizing the integrity of the planet's life support systems.

Still, the overarching, and at times cataclysmic, social, cultural and technological changes that constitute the modern and post-modern experiments of the last 200 years would appear to make any significant resurrection of pre-modern family forms both unthinkable and impossible. But the kinds of families a society has are not simply the products of inevitable and abstract forces beyond human control. Our families are also public policy creations whose evolution can be traced through specific legislative and executive decisions. For example, what kind of families might be possible if tax policy were to penalize, rather than reward, corporate farmers who claim depreciation allowances on expensive, labor saving machinery and whose excessive use of fertilizers, pesticides, herbicides and fungicides sickens the land over which they have temporary stewardship? Would policies that rewarded ecologically sustainable, labor intensive agriculture enable a larger number of American families to return to the land and make their living from it? At present these questions appear so far removed from contemporary policy debates as to obviate the need for answers. Nevertheless, when we finally confront the fundamental problems of both planetary sustainability and sustaining family relationships, rather than socially constructed preoccupations like monetary policy and budget deficits, we may well find that our best option is to go back, in order to move ahead.

Further Data Analysis: Bi-variate and Multi-variate Relationships

Although women carry a disproportionate share of homestead responsibilities and express higher levels of dissatisfaction with the farmstead division of labor, they are just as likely to be satisfied with their conjugal relationships as males. The question arises, then, as to whether there are compensating factors that explain the variance in spousal satisfaction in the apparent of absence of the predictive ability of division of labor. Some of the potential compensating factors are discussed below in the measurement section. They include measures that assess the nature of the back-to-the-country experience (mindfulness), those that indicate commitment to the back-to-the-land way of life (modernity value scale), variables that are sensitive to degree of freedom neo-homesteaders experience, both on and off their properties (leisure).

Measurement

Appendix I contains many of the study's salient indicators. Mindfulness taps the broadly based spiritual dimension of living pact to the land by asking survey respondents how often experiences such phenomena as a sense of wonder, peace of mind, a feeling of wholeness, etc. The value scale modernity is one that discriminates quite well in terms of identifying the ways that homesteads respond to the possibility of a low technology or relatively rustic way of life, i.e., living without indoor plumbing, clothes dryers or microwave ovens, etc. Leisure

looks at whether smallholders feel rushed, have time for travel, see themselves as being tied down and not having time for leisure. Division of labor conceptualized here as a burden index was measured in terms of a straightforward summated index based on the respondents answers to the questions of which partner (usually wife, usually the husband, both about the same, etc.) do specific homestead chores or responsibilities, e.g., cleaning the house, taking care of the animals, getting the children to bed, etc.

The dependent variables include three quality of life measures: (1) satisfaction with partner relationship (from very to not at all satisfied), (2) general happiness (very happy to not at all happy), and (3) global satisfaction (a five item factor analyzed scale summarized in Appendix I, including satisfaction with family life, area of residence, current finances, etc.).

Analysis of Variance and Zero-order Correlations

Table I trichotomizes the burden index into three segments for four aspects of farmstead division of labor, and then looks at the variation in four quality of life measures, adding satisfaction with family life (from very satisfied to not at all) to those discussed above. In Table I the conditions that show consistent statistically significant relationships between division of labor and quality of life are those that pertain to satisfaction with partner by female respondents. It would appear then that when females homesteaders see themselves doing most of the homestead work, these perceptions affect their expression of satisfaction with their partners — more perceived burdens relate to lower partner satisfaction scores.

How, though, might these relationships find expression in zero-order correlations, and what other factors are related to quality of life? In terms of the division of labor Table II shows the same general trend as Table I, but perhaps even in a more pronounced way. For males, seven of the 20 correlations show statistical significance, though only two are at .20 or greater (-.22 and -.20). (The signs here are negative and in the direction hypothesized, since the division of labor indicators where the husbands are doing all or most of the work in question are coded with lower numbers). On the other hand, nine of the division of labor correlation for females are statistically significant, with one of them reaching .41 (child care division of labor and relationship with partner).

A number of other factors, at the zero-order level, show more of a consistent pattern of statistically significant relationships. Time for leisure, for example has statistical significance with six of the possible eight quality of life measures, by both male and female. Here, again, women appear to be particularly sensitive to the variable of time for leisure, with consistently higher correlations, including .49 between leisure time and global satisfaction. Mindfulness also shows the same pattern, although the correlation coefficients are not as strong. Commitment in terms of the modernity scale, however, explains, at the zero-order level, little variance in the quality of life indicators.

Multiple Regression Models

Table III contains five multiple regression models that use as variables in the multiple regression equations the statistically significant zero-order correlations from Table II. The models are grouped by variable

clusters and according to gender. In model I division of labor does explain some (.086 to .156) variance except in the case of the case of females and global satisfaction.

Model II highlights again the importance of time for leisure, particularly for females, in explaining variance in the quality of life measures. Leisure explains variance in global satisfaction for both men and women, but a much greater share for females (.253 to .043). Mindfulness (model III) also has a role in explaining variance in quality of life, though not in the case of relationship with partner for either males or females. The variance explained for the other two quality of life indicators is a modest .070 and .056, although for males in terms of general happiness it rises to .156. In model III the back-to-the-land values show a comparatively weak and inconsistent ability to explain variance. For females commitment (here operationalized as desire to live and work on a back-to-the-land farmstead for the rest of one's life) does add .030 to variance explained for global satisfaction, and the modernity value scale also adds marginal variance explained (.032) for males and global satisfaction.

Turning now to the combined models, where the variables that demonstrated statistical significance in models I-IV are allowed to enter the multiple regression equations in terms of their ability to explain variance, it first becomes quite evident that the division of labor, either in its component parts or in terms of a burden index, is not a factor in explaining variance in quality of life. And in fact, for satisfaction with partner, none of the factors operationalized show statistical significance when all variables where allowed to compete against each other in terms of their ability to explain variance. Evidently, in terms of the dynamics of personal relationships there are factors outside the demographic, value, division of labor nexus that explain variance. But in terms of the remaining two, and more general, quality of life measures, value and process variables are able to explain substantial amount of variance. For males it is interesting to note that time for leisure does not add to variance explained. Here, for the males, the experience of mindfulness enters the equation first for general happiness and explains .158 per cent of the variance, and then enters second for general happiness, adding .045 to the variance explained. A performance indicator, TSR Index (which measure the adoption and effective use of alternative technologies) does enter second for males and general happiness, explaining another .126 of the variance. But for females, it is not so much the instrumental variables which explain variance; rather, it is those that lend themselves to a sense of freedom (leisure) and spirituality (mindfulness). For general satisfaction, leisure enters first in the combined model and explains 23.9 per cent of the variance, with mindfulness adding another .038, and for general happiness leisure again enters first to explain 10.5 per cent of the variance. Here, though, mindfulness enters third after food production (percentage of food produced on the farmstead) to explain an additional 4.3 per cent of the variance.

In conclusion, perceived and apparent inequity in the division of labor does not affect quality of life for back-to-the-land homesteaders, particularly female smallholders. While the spiritual nature of back-to-the-land living and a sense of freedom from farmstead chores does not explain variance in satisfaction with a partner relationship, these two dimensions of back-to-the-country life, do account for considerable variance in subjective well-being, indicating that they may well function as compensating factors for female smallholders who often shoulder a greater share of labor on back-to-the-land homesteads.

1. "Going Back — or Ahead — to Horses," in The Gift of Good Land (San Francisco: Northpoint Press, 1981), p. 195.
2. For further detail on the back-to-the-land movement, see Jeffrey Jacob, New Pioneers: The Back to the Land Movement and the Search for a Sustainable Future (University Park, Pa.: Penn State University Press, 1997); Jeffrey C. Jacob, "Searching for a Sustainable Future: Experiences from the Back-to-the-Land Movement," Futures Research Quarterly 8(Spring, 1992), pp. 5-29; Jeffrey C. Jacob and Merlin B. Brinkerhoff, "Alternative Technology and Part-time, Semi-subsistence Agriculture: A Survey from the Back-to-the-Land Movement." Rural Sociology 51 (Spring, 1986), pp. 43-59.
3. We are not entirely comfortable using post-modern as an adjective here. Post-modern or post-modernism is a fluid term with a variety of connotations and meanings — and, some would claim, no meaning at all. Nevertheless, we believe it still possess the virtue of a short-hand description for the dual career families of the late twentieth century. For a critique of "pomo" as analytical and empirical categories, see Ellen Meiksins Wood, "Modernity, Postmodernity, or Capitalism?" Monthly Review, July-August 1996, pp. 21-39; cf. Ellen Meiksins Wood and John Bellamy Foster, In Defense of History, Marxism and the Postmodern Agenda (New York: Monthly Review Press, 1997).
4. The characterization here of the post-modern family as a childless, dual career couple glosses over the complex nature of post-modern family forms. Judith Stacey, for example, outlines a variety of family structures which are the products of divorce, remarriage and step kinship, i.e., extended families that include ex-spouses, ex-spouses' current partners, ex-spouses' ex-partners, and the children, grandparents, in-laws and previous in-laws related to These coupling and uncoupling processes. For further explication of these phenomena, see Stacey's In the Name of the Family, Re-Thinking Family Values in the Postmodern Age (Boston: Beacon, 1996).
5. The previous four paragraphs draw on a variety of cross-cultural and historical resources, including: Laurel Herbenar Bossen, The Redivision of Labor, Women and Economic Choice in Four Guatemalan Communities (Albany: SUNY Press, 1984); Merielle Flood, "Changing Patterns of Interdependence: The Effects of Increasing Monetization on Gender Relations in Zinacantan, Mexico," Research in Economic Anthropology 15(1994), pp. 145-173; Elizabeth Fox-Genovese, "Women in Agriculture during the Nineteenth Century" in Lou Ferleger, ed., Agriculture and National Development, Views on the Nineteenth Century (Ames: Iowa State University Press); Amy Dru Stanley, "Home Life and the Morality of the Market," in Melvyn Stokes and Stephen Conway, eds., The Market Revolution in America (Charlottesville and London: University Press of Virginia, 1996), pp. 74-96; and Stephanie Coontz's three books, The Social Origins of Private Life, A History of American Families 1600-1900 (New York and London: Verso, 1988); The Way We Never Were, American Families and the Nostalgia Trap (New York: Basic Books, 1992); and The Way We Really Are, Coming to Terms with America's Changing Families (New York: Basic Books, 1997).
6. Our analysis unfortunately ignores, but does not wish to slight, the women who by necessity, rather than by choice, have employment outside of their homes. By some estimates, half of their families would drop below the poverty line if they were not able to continue working.
7. An intriguing example of the feminist dismissal of the pre-modern family and feminism's inability to distinguish pre-modern from modern families comes by way of Wendell Berry's misadventures with his feminist critics. In an essay, "Why I am not Going to Buy a Personal Computer," published in Harper's, Berry explained that his wife, serving as typist, copy editor and critic, transfers his handwritten work to typescript. He characterizes their work together as "a literary cottage industry that works well and pleasantly. I do not see anything wrong with it." A number of Harper's readers, however, did see something wrong

with the Berrys' literary cottage industry and wrote letters to the editor to protest Berry's exploitation of his wife's labor. Berry's reply to his critics illustrates how the advocates of post-modern family ideals are susceptible to permitting emotion to alter their ability to draw warranted conclusions from available evidence. "If I had written in my essay that my wife worked as a typist and editor for a publisher, doing the same work that she does for me, no feminists, I daresay, would have written to Harper's to attack me for exploiting her — even though, for all they knew, I might have forced her to do such work in order to keep me in gambling money. It would have been assumed as a matter of course that if she had a job away from home she was a 'liberated woman,' possessed of a dignity that no home could confer upon her." What Are People For? (San Francisco: Northpoint Press, 1990), pp. 170, 182.

8. The following section closely follows Jacob, New Pioneers, pp. 133-45.
9. Peter Stisser, "A Deeper Shade of Green," American Demographics, March 1994, pp. 24-29.

TABLE I: THE RELATIONSHIPS BETWEEN DIVISION OF LABOUR[a] AND SELECTED DIMENSIONS OF QUALITY OF LIFE FOR BACK-TO-THE-LANDERS: AN ANALYSIS OF VARIANCE BY GENDER

Quality of Life Dimension by Form of Division of Labour	REPORTED BY MALES Mean Scores Mainly Wife	Equal	Mainly Husband	F-ratio	Sig. Level	REPORTED BY FEMALES Mean Scores Mainly Wife	Equal	Mainly Husband	F-ratio	Sig. Level
Satisfaction with Partner:										
Inside Work	3.82	3.80	3.73	.545	.581	3.61	3.66	3.81	1.592	.206
Outside Work	3.82	3.87	3.76	1.981	.144	3.51	3.81	3.89	6.612	.002
Non-specific Work	3.88	3.87	3.73	2.100	.126	3.55	3.78	3.82	3.491	.032
Childcare	3.80	3.67	3.79	.562	.572	3.38	3.70	3.88	5.265	.007
Burden Index[b]	3.92	3.84	3.76	.838	.435	3.52	3.79	3.93	4.567	.012
Family Life Satisfaction:										
Inside Work	3.72	3.71	3.68	.105	.900	3.58	3.58	3.65	.185	.831
Outside Work	3.70	3.78	3.64	1.426	.246	3.56	3.59	3.82	1.035	.357
Non-specific Work	3.87	3.82	3.67	2.060	.131	3.53	3.64	3.73	.959	.385
Childcare	3.60	3.74	3.73	.360	.699	3.40	3.63	3.69	1.735	.182
Burden Index[b]	3.73	3.80	3.70	.464	.630	3.54	3.64	3.80	1.019	.363
General Happiness:										
Inside Work	3.31	3.26	3.17	1.08	.340	3.36	3.25	3.40	1.104	.334
Outside Work	3.45	3.26	3.26	.594	.553	3.40	3.26	3.44	1.572	.210
Non-specific Work	3.29	3.22	3.25	.156	.855	3.34	3.34	3.33	.004	.996
Childcare	3.30	2.93	3.16	2.200	.117	3.08	3.18	3.46	3.432	.037
Burden Index[b]	3.50	3.24	3.24	1.313	.272	3.37	3.29	3.47	.620	.539
Global Index[c]:										
Inside Work	17.38	17.17	16.82	1.196	.304	17.17	16.94	16.56	.934	.394
Outside Work	17.20	17.38	16.80	1.408	.248	16.93	16.94	12.31	.172	.842
Non-specific Work	17.33	17.14	17.18	.049	.952	16.58	17.11	17.47	1.359	.260
Childcare	16.10	16.73	16.92	.678	.510	15.92	16.77	17.12	2.121	.126
Burden Index[b]	17.30	17.50	16.83	1.474	.233	16.84	17.00	17.07	.087	.916

[a] Parameters for the Division of Labour Scales are found in Appendix I. The responses *"Usually the wife more than husband"* are collapsed in the *"Mainly wife"* category and the *"Husband more than wife"* and *"Usually the husband"* in the *"Mainly husband"* category.

[b] Burden Index is a summated scale of all items in the Division of Labour Scales.

[c] Global Satisfaction is a multiple item scale, built through factor analysis, whose parameters are found in Appendix I.

TABLE 2: SELECTED DIMENSIONS OF QUALITY OF LIFE RELATED[a] TO DIVISION OF LABOUR, WORK OVERLOAD, HOMESTEAD FACTORS AND DEMOGRAPHIC CHARACTERISTICS FOR BACK-TO-THE-LANDERS, BY GENDER

	QUALITY OF LIFE DIMENSIONS							
	Relationship with Partner		Family Relationship		General Happiness		Global Satisfaction	
Predictor Variables	Husbands	Wives	Husbands	Wives	Husbands	Wives	Husbands	Wives
Division of Labour								
Inside Work[b]	-.08	.10	-.04	.04	-.12	.04	-.08**	-.01
Outside Work[b]	-.15*	.27****	-.09	.09	-.08	-.02	-.11	.11
Non-specific Work[b]	-.16*	.24****	-.15*	.18**	-.03	.09	.01	.22**
Childcare[b]	-.11	.41****	.00	.24*	.04	.24*	.01	.24**
Burden Index[c]	-.19*	.24***	-.12	.12	-.22**	.02	-.20*	.09
Work Overload								
Leisure Time[b]	.05	.23**	.13	.29****	.31****	.36****	.24****	.49****
Work Status	.05	-.06	.01	-.05	-.15*	-.10	-.12	-.11
Children at Home	-.04	.00	-.06	-.02	-.11	-.15*	-.23***	-.14
Homestead Factors								
TSR Index[d]	.04	-.10	.12	-.06	.29****	.06	.18**	.01
Commitment[f]	.05	.08	.07	.12	.05	.22****	.05	.17**
Food Production[e]	.06	.06	.22***	.09	.37****	.22***	.24****	.10
Mindfulness Value[b]	.08	.23****	.11	.23****	.32****	.36****	.22***	.34****
Modernism Value[b]	.01	.01	-.02	-.00	.00	-.09	.15*	.12
Demographic Factors								
Age	.01	-.06	-.00	-.00	.23****	.12	.15*	.23****
Residence	.03	.06	-.08	.04	-.22****	.00	-.08	-.10
Education	.02	-.10	-.04	-.07	-.15*	.04	-.01	.00
Family Income	.08	-.05	-.04	-.05	-.08	-.07	.05	.06
Farm Experience	.11	.02	.14*	.07	.05	.08	.08	.00

a Pearson product moment correlations are reported with *≤.05, **≥.01, ***≥.005 and ****≥.001.

b Multiple item scales with the parameters reported in Appendix I.

c Burden Index is the summated index of all items in the Division of Labour Scale.

d TSR Index summates whether a homesteader possesses 25 "technological self reliance" items and their effectiveness, e.g., windpower, woodlot, weeder geese. Scores can range from 0 to 100.

e Food production includes the percent of food eaten which is produced on the property.

f Commitment refers to how they feel about spending the rest of their lives on a "labour intensive" small farm.

TABLE 3: Models Predicting Selected Dimensions of Quality of Life from Division of Labour, Work Overload, Homstead and Demographic Factors, By Gender - through Stepwise Regression[a]

Variables in Equation	RELATIONSHIP WITH PARTNER Beta[b]	Multiple R[c]	MRC^2	GENERAL HAPPINESS Beta	Multiple R	MRC^2	GLOBAL SATISFACTION Beta	Multiple R	MRC^2
Model I: Husbands									
	DIVISION OF LABOUR N=53			DIVISION OF LABOUR N=55			DIVISION OF LABOUR N=53		
Outside Work	-.293*	.293	.086	Burden Index -.367***	.367	.135	Outside Work -.388***	.388	.150
Non-specific Work	-.293			Childcare .206			Childcare .245		
Burden Index	.122			Inside Work .020			Inside Work .105		
Childcare	.104			Outside Work -.014			Burden Index .082		
Inside Work	.037			Non-Specific Work -.107			Non-Specific Work .078		
Model I: Wives									
	DIVISION OF LABOUR N=74			DIVISION OF LABOUR N=75			DIVISION OF LABOUR[d]		
Childcare	.395***	.395	.156	Childcare .304**	.304	.092			
Non-specific Work	.070			Outside Work -.136					
Burden Index	.039			Burden Index -.114					
Outside Work	.028			Non-specific Work -.063					
Inside Work	-.009			Inside Work .033					
Model II: Husbands									
	WORK OVERLOAD[d]			WORK OVERLOAD[d]			WORK OVERLOAD N=174		
							Leisure .204**	.204	.042
							Children -.153*	.251	.063
							Work Status -.096		
Model II: Wives									
	WORK OVERLOAD N=156			WORK OVERLOAD			WORK OVERLOAD N=149		
Leisure	.251***	.251	.063	Leisure .346****	.346	.119	Leisure .503****	.503	.253
Children	.073			Children -.097			Work Status -.052		
	-.058			Work Status -.001			Children -.029		
Model III: Husbands									
	HOMESTEAD FACTORS[d]			HOMESTEAD FACTORS N=150			HOMESTEAD FACTORS N=140		
				Mindfulness .335****	.395	.156	Food Production .270***	.244	.060
				TSR Index .207*	.492	.242	Modernism .194*	.304	.092
				Modernism Value .206***	.620	.271	Mindfulness .173*	.348	.121
				Food Production .223**	.548	.301	TSR Index .074		
				Commitment .026			Experience .060		
				Experience .001			Commitment -.020		

Model III: Wives

HOMESTEAD FACTORS[d]				HOMESTEAD FACTORS N=155				HOMESTEAD FACTORS N=146			
				Mindfulness	.245***	.264	.070	Mindfulness	.211**	.238	.056
				Food Production	.176*	.371	.100	Commitment	.172*	.292	.086
				Commitment	.133			Modernism	.151		
				Experience	.087			Food Production	.078		
				Modernism	-.069			Experience	-.013		
				TSR Index	.028			TSR Index	.000		

Model IV: Husbands

DEMOGRAPHIC FACTORS[d]				DEMOGRAPHIC FACTORS N=224				DEMOGRAPHIC FACTORS N=209			
				Age	.238***	.239	.057	Age	-.146*	.146	.021
				Residence	-.215***	.322	.104	Income	.089		
				Education	-.123			Residence	-.05		
				Income	.009			Education	.009		

Model IV: Wives

DEMOGRAPHIC FACTORS[d]				DEMOGRAPHIC FACTORS[d]				DEMOGRAPHIC FACTORS N=196			
								Age	.224***	.224	.050
								Income	.086		
								Residence	-.080		
								Education	.007		

Model V: Husbands

COMBINED[d,e]				COMBINED[e] N=98				COMBINED[e] N=91			
				Mindfulness	.360***	.397	.158	Age	.254*	.294	.086
				TSR Index	.357****	.533	.284	Mindfulness	.214**	.362	.131
				Residence	-.163			Outside Work	-.161		
				BurdenIndex	-.106			Modernism	-.147		
				Age	-.019			Children	-.119		
				Modernism	.018			Food Production	.093		
				Food Production	-.002			Leisure	.070		

Model V: Wives

COMBINED[d,e]				COMBINED[e] N=151				COMBINED[e] N=190			
				Leisure	.304****	.324	.105	Leisure	.407****	.483	.239
				Food Production	.238***	.419	.176	Mindfulness	.224****	.527	.277
				Mindfulness	.218***	.468	.219	Age	.123		
								Commitment	.098		

a The first independent variable entered into the equation is the one with the highest correlation with the dependent variable. To be selected, variables must have F values ≤ .05, the PIN criterion. The next variable selected is the one with the highest partial correlation. After the first variable is selected, stepwise regression examines the remaining variables to remove those with F values ≤ .10, (see Norusis, 1993: 346-350).

b Betas are those found in the final equation.

c Multiple Rs (MRC) and MRC2s, the cumulative multiple regression coefficients, are reported only for those equations where the variables are statistically significant at the .05 level or less. Statistical significance levels are: * ≤ .05; ** ≤ .01; and *** ≤ .005.

d No variables met the PIN criterion discussed in Footnote a.

e The combined model, for each dependent variable, contains only those variables which were statistically significant for the separate models examined earlier; therefore, the combined models for the three subjective well-being dependent variables all contain different variables.

APPENDIX I: DIVISION OF LABOUR, LEISURE, HOMESTEAD AND GLOBAL SATISFACTION MEASURES - A summary table of the parameters of scale construction

	FACTOR ANALYSIS[a]			SUMMATED SCALES[b]			
SCALE NAME	Number of Items	Range of Loadings	Eigen-values	Alphas	Ranges	Means	Standard Deviation	No. of Respondents[c]
Division of Labour:								
Inside Work[d]	3	.88-.93	2.48	.89	3-15	6.10	3.82	
Outside Work[e]	4	.71-.80	2.40	.78	4-20	15.44	4.04	
Non-Specific Work[f]	3	.69-.80	1.63	.58	3-15	10.27	3.36	
Childcare Work[g]	3	.87-.92	2.45	.89	3-15	9.46	4.30	
Work Overload:								
Leisure[h]	4	.54-.81	2.04	.67	4-16	10.28	2.58	554
Homestead Values:								
Modernity[i]	5	.67-.79	2.63	.77	5-20	13.42	3.14	542
Mindfulness[j]	7	.68-.84	4.14	.87	7-35	26.78	5.21	523
Quality of Life:								
Global Satisfaction[k]	5	.58-.72	2.12	.66	5-25	17.07	2.37	537

a Employs principle factoring with iteration (Kim, 1975).

b The higher the scale scores, the higher the three underlying values and QoL.

c N's vary due to non-response on selected items. Some Division of Labour items (e.g., Childcare) are not applicable. To be included respondents were required to answer at least 75% of the items, for the occasional non-response, the mean of the items answered was employed for the missing response.

d Inside work includes "who in your family (1) prepares the meals, (2) washes the dishes, (3) cleans the house".

e Outside work includes "who (1) does the gardening, (2) cares for the animals, (3) cuts the wood, and (4) repairs things".

f Non-specific work includes who (1) repairs things (2) does craftwork (weaving, woodwork, etc.) and (3) manages the finances.

g Childcare work combines who (1) gets the children to bed, (2) tells the children what chores to do, and (3) disciplines the children.

h items include: (1) time of leisure, (2) feelings of being rushed, (3) being tied down, and (4) enough time for travel.

i Modernity items include: importance of (1) having a gas or electric clothes dryer, (2) having an indoor toilet or bathroom, (3) living in a modern house, (4) having electricity in your home, and (5) having a microwave oven.

j Mindfulness items include: feelings of (1) sense of wonder, (2) union with nature, (3) peace of mind, (4) wholeness, (5) joy, (6) living in present moment, and (7) being accepted.

k Global satisfaction items include: satisfaction with (1) current housing, (2) area where you live, (3) current financial situation, (4) your family life, and (5) relationship with neighbours.